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ABSTRACT

When part-time or adjunct faculty have been on the same campus for 10 years or when they teach several sections per semester, they are not rendering partial service. All institutions of higher education owe much of their success to these adjunct instructors who can provide students with experience that links education to the workplace and make up 63% of community college faculty nationwide. A questionnaire administered to 149 adjunct faculty members at Prince George's Community College in Maryland revealed that personal satisfaction and acquiring teaching experience for career purposes were their primary reasons for doing adjunct teaching. The questionnaire, and subsequent focus group sessions, also revealed that adjunct faculty feel the need for a greater sense of belonging to the institution and for a better orientation to the campus and college policies. Changes were instituted in 1990-91 following the survey recommendations: (1) increase pay based on longevity; (2) list names and provide appropriate educational title of adjunct instructors who have taught 24 hours or more in the college catalog; (3) uniformly use the title "adjunct," not "part-time;" (4) hold new faculty orientation sessions each semester; (5) offer more faculty workshops; (6) create an adjunct faculty handbook; (7) annually honor a nominated and selected outstanding adjunct faculty member. (SAM)

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Marlene C. Cohen

BENEFITS ON A BUDGET: ADDRESSING ADJUNCT NEEDS

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BENEFITS ON A BUDGET: ADDRESSING ADJUNCT NEEDS

A paper for panel "Part Time Permanence: There's Nothing Temporary about Part Time Faculty," 87th Annual Meeting of Speech Communication Association, Chicago IL, November 1, 1992

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For starters, what do we call these fellow faculty members? The switch from the term "part-time" to the term "adjunct" is symbolic of change to a perception that I believe is more appreciative and fair to adjunct faculty. They are, in Webster's terms, "something joined or added to another thing." When they've been at the same campus for ten years or more, when they teach as many as three sections per semester, or nine per year, there hardly seems to be anything partial about the service.

All institutions of higher education owe much of their success to this adjunct resource. Adjunct faculty often are also employed outside teaching and can provide students with experiences linking their education to a variety of workplace settings. As one adjunct quoted a student's comment: "I like having you because you can talk about what you did this morning," linking work and instruction.

PGCC's Vice President of Instruction, Dr. Dennis Bartow, has written that "without our adjunct faculty, we would be hard-pressed to achieve our College mission."

And they are of course the economic bargain of the century, a plus to the College, while a source of serious frustration for faculty. Our College Controller Gerard DeSeve told me that "adjunct faculty give students a price we could never provide otherwise." In fall 1992, adjunct faculty at Prince George's Community College are teaching 40% of all class sections. Besides adjuncts' lower per-hour salary, DeSeve pointed out that the cost of fringe benefits makes each full-time faculty cost the College 130% of salary per hour, while adjuncts cost 108% of their lower salary level.

The flexibility in scheduling adjuncts, DeSeve points out, also allows the College to experiment with offering alternative scheduling and waiting until the last minute to see how students respond. Though the flip side is that last-minute scheduling is hard on an adjunct faculty member's lifestyle.

At Prince George's Community College our 383 adjunct faculty members employed this fall make up 65% of our credit faculty workforce. This parallels community colleges across the US. The American Association of Community Colleges reports from fall 1989 data that 63% of community college faculty are adjunct; 187,645

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adjunct community college faculty nationwide!

Adjunct faculty is a "something added" that has provided no less than the survival of low-cost community college education in the financially-strapped times of the 80s and 90s. Even "adjunct" understates their central role.

So how do we offer our thanks for such valuable service? Low pay, no benefits, no sick days...hardly a situation of which to be proud. On our campus there is no adjunct organization at all.

In 1989 Mary Kaye O'Neill, Coordinator of Professional Development at Prince George's Community College, tackled this problem through the Office of Instruction. My involvement linked the Office of Advancement and Planning to the project, providing me and other faculty whom I had trained at focus group research techniques. Through a questionnaire to all adjunct faculty and four focus group interviews of adjunct faculty, two groups each for new and experienced teachers, we made a coordinated effort to determine what rewards other than increased salary would appeal to adjunct faculty.

ADJUNCT FACULTY OPINIONS

Of possible factors influencing their decision to teach for us, the major factor was "personal satisfaction," with two-thirds of 149 survey respondents ranking that first or second of six choices. The second most important factor was "acquiring teaching experience for career purposes," valued by one-third of respondents. Predictably, our low salaries were only considered a "major source of income" for fifteen percent of respondents.

Adjunct faculty were asked what services of the college were of most importance to them and how effectively Prince George's Community College provides those services. The following summarizes the survey response on items considered most important, selected from fifteen items:

IMPORTANCE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF SERVICES (149 respondents)

Service	# found it important	% found PGCC effective
Guidance from chairperson/ coordinator	123	89%
Copying and duplicating	114	74%
Support and/or contact with full-time faculty/staff	113	62%
Knowledge of resources available to your students	107	54%
Acceptance as a faculty colleague	107	65%
Access to parking facilities	105	72%
Clerical support	103	83%

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Also important to us were the following items considered to be ineffectively handled by the college by at least one-fifth of respondents:

IMPORTANCE AND INEFFECTIVENESS OF SERVICES (149 respondents)

Service	# found it important	% found PGCC ineffective
Assistance with improving teaching	85	30%
Acknowledgement and recognition	88	30%
Office space	72	25%
Knowledge of resources available to your students	107	21%

This information was quite helpful in determining what additional benefits and services were needed.

Two common themes emerged from the four focus groups (37 total participants). First was the need for a greater sense of belonging to the institution. Understandably the evening instructors felt greater isolation than daytime adjunct faculty.

Some spoke of the desire to be invited to all workshops and meetings where information about teaching would be provided or swapped. Though they would not always be free, it would feel great to be invited. The most popular answer to the survey question, "What would help improve part-time faculty teaching?" was "more involvement with full-time faculty and/or the department."

There was an accompanying strong sentiment for wanting more recognition within the faculty. "What's your title after seventeen years? TBA!" said one focus group member.

A second theme from the focus groups was the desire for a greater sharing of information about the institution. Participants voiced concern for their students when they could not answer important student questions on college policies and procedures. Sharing of information between a department's faculty was sought as well.

Some expressed interest in being invited to observe full-time faculty classes and to know more about teaching. Though confident of the course subject matter, some expressed lack of knowledge of how best to teach the material. In the survey, 73% of respondents said they definitely or probably would attend occasional workshops on teaching/learning issues.

A third major common issue from the new adjunct faculty focus groups was a desire for a general orientation to the campus.

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Departments provide such orientation to varying degrees across the campus.

A third major common issue from the returning adjunct faculty focus groups was the love of teaching. Uniformly instructors spoke of their enjoyment of the classroom, even though the pay was awful. They spoke of love for the students, the school and the faculty. This enthusiasm is reflected in the high percentage, for a transient neighborhood, almost one-third, who have taught at PGCC over ten semesters.

REWARDS PUT IN PLACE FOR ADJUNCT FACULTY

Based upon recommendations from the survey and the focus groups, Prince George's Community College was able quickly to institute changes that would reward adjunct faculty with very little or no expense to the College. The following actions were taken in 1989-90:

*Changes in the pay schedule to set initial rate based upon college degrees earned, but provide step increases based upon number of hours taught. Now adjunct faculty may improve their per-hour pay on the basis of longevity. Pay increases of $15 per credit hour are given at each of the following increments: 0-24 equivalent credit hours, 25-48 equivalent credit hours, 49-72 equivalent credit hours, 73+ equivalent credit hours. Continuing Education courses taught also count into the totals at a three-quarters-to-one-hour rate.

*List in the College catalog all adjunct faculty who have taught twenty-four hours or more. Provide titles appropriate to educational level obtained; PhD/JDs are considered Professors, MAs are considered Associate Professors, and BAs are considered Assistant Professors.

*Uniformly use the title "adjunct," not "part-time."

*Hold new faculty orientation sessions (three hours) each semester with invitations to all new faculty, full-time and adjunct.

*Offer more and more diverse faculty development workshops. Provide them at multiple times; day, evening and Saturday hours. Target invitations to some events to adjunct faculty only, others to both full-time and adjunct. Send invitations far in advance to accommodate adjunct schedules, infrequent mailbox visits and possible off-campus locations. Send personal notes of thanks to adjunct faculty who attend. Find ways to reward faculty who volunteer their time to attend. (That one needs more consideration.)

*Create an adjunct faculty handbook, explaining detailed steps for College procedures that may be necessary for faculty, as student support services, audio-visual assistance, and library policies.

*Honor annually a nominated and selected outstanding adjunct faculty at the Honors Convocation that yearly honors an outstanding administrator, faculty, and staff member.

Other suggestions were not appropriate for collegewide action, but are deserving of departmental attention. Adjunct faculty urged a seniority system which might provide some people a guaranteed job each semester, or provide a guaranteed time schedule. Departments not already doing so should be encouraged to pair adjunct faculty with departmental faculty mentors. Some adjunct faculty spoke of lacking a private designated office space. Long-time adjunct faculty felt insulted at not being able to participate in decision-making on textbooks or master syllabi.

SUMMARY

Considering the bargain provided our departments by qualified adjunct speech communication faculty, willing to teach inconvenient hours for so little pay, I urge all of us to remember the importance of using our best interpersonal skills with our closest colleagues. A friendly atmosphere, a strong sense of inclusion, up-to-date campus information (provided with enough lead time for those receiving mail at extension centers), opportunities to meet other full-time and adjunct faculty, and assistance with lining up equipment or substitutes are the minimum we should readily offer our adjunct faculty.

But to serve in an on-going way, we need to assess the channels we are providing adjunct faculty to make their needs known. There is much that more money could do to improve the situation, but with Maryland state cutbacks two years running, that won't happen any time soon. Some important changes wanted, however, take very little effort; they do require good listening.

Dr. Eugene Arden, vice-chancellor of the University of Michigan, Dearborn, wrote in The Chronicle of Higher Education, May 17, 1989, "recent research confirms overwhelmingly that many adjuncts are in dire need of training to help them plan a syllabus or a daily lesson, construct fair but revealing tests, and know when to direct students to the counseling office and tutoring center...[O]ur primary, overriding responsibility...is to do whatever is necessary, within the limits of reason and resources, to help adjuncts be as effective as possible in the classroom." And, I would add, to reward and keep comfortable the experienced adjuncts who are skilled at the tasks Arden described. We don't want to lose them.

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